

All perfect praise is due to Allaah; I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allaah and that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger; may Allaah send salutations upon him and exalt his mention, as well as his family and all his companions.

Contemplation is one of the greatest deeds performed by the heart; it is the key that opens the door which allows the light of guidance to enter; it is the initial step in the direction of correct understanding and comprehension; many people know its virtue but are unaware of its reality, essence and its fruits. Allaah Has commanded us to contemplate, but few do so. He also praises the few who actually do. Allaah says:

الذين يذكرون الله قياماً وقعوداً وعلى جنوبهم ويتفكرون في خلق السموات والأرض ربنا ما خلقت هذا باطلاً

which means: ***"[Those] Who remember Allaah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], 'Our Lord! You did not create this aimlessly…'"*** **[*Aal 'Imraan: 191*] *'Ataa'*, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "*'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr and I once went to visit 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, and when we arrived she spoke to us from behind a veil saying: 'O 'Ubayd! What stops from visiting me?' He, may Allaah be pleased with him, replied: 'The narration in which the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "Visit at intervals, people would therefore like and miss you more." Then he asked her: 'Tell us the most amazing thing that you experienced with the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam; she then wept and said: 'All his affairs were amazing, but one night he came to me (i.e., it was her turn to spend the night with) and said to me: "Do not interrupt me, for tonight I wish to worship my Lord." Then, he performed ablution, stood up in prayer, and cried until his beard was soaked; then, he went down into prostration and continued to cry until he soaked the floor, then, he concluded his prayer and laid down on his side until Bilaal, may Allaah be pleased with him, came to inform him that it was time for the Fajr prayer, and when Bilaal, may Allaah be pleased with him, saw his condition, he inquired: 'O messenger of Allaah! Why do you cry so much when Allaah has forgiven all your past and future sins?' He sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam replied: "Some verses were revealed to me last night; woe to the one who recites them and does not contemplate over them!" Then he sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam recited:*

الذين يذكرون الله قياماً وقعوداً وعلى جنوبهم ويتفكرون في خلق السموات والأرض ربنا ما خلقت هذا باطلاً

which means: ***""[Those] Who remember Allaah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], 'Our Lord! You did nor create this aimlessly…'"*** **[*Aal 'Imraan: 191*]**

Muhammad ibn Waas'i*, may Allaah have mercy upon him, narrated: *"A man from the people of Basrah travelled to Umm Tharr, may Allaah be pleased with her, after the death of Abu Tharr, may Allaah be pleased with him, and asked her about the manner in which Abu Tharr would worship, and so she replied: 'He would spend most of his day in a corner of the house, contemplating.'"

***Al-Hasan*, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: *"He whose words are not those of wisdom, his silence is not spent in contemplation and his observations are not to take lessons. Such a person is heedless and is squandering his time."* He, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said regarding the one hundred and forty-sixth verse of chapter *Al-A'raaf* in which Allaah says:**

سأصرف عن آياتي الذين يتكبرون في الأرض بغير الحق

which means: *"I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant upon the earth without right…"* [*Al-A'raaf: 146*] that it means "*I (i.e., Allaah) will prevent their hearts from contemplating."*

'Abdullaah ibn Al-Mubaarak*, may Allaah have mercy upon him, once saw *Sahl ibn 'Uday*, may Allaah have mercy upon him, in silent contemplation, so he asked him: *"How far have you reached?"* to which he replied: *"The Siraat (i.e., the bridge over Hell)."

Bishr*, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: *"If people contemplate over the greatness of Allaah, they will never disobey Him."

Abu Shurayh*, may Allaah have mercy upon him, once sat down and covered his head with his garment and began weeping. When he was asked why, he replied: *"I contemplated, and realised how much of my life has ended, how few my good deeds are, and how close I am to death - so I cried."

Abu Sulaymaan*, may Allaah have mercy upon him, once advised the people saying: *"Train your eyes to cry and your hearts to contemplate."

Ibn 'Abbaas*, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: *"Contemplating over good deeds causes one to perform them and regretting evil leads to one abandoning it. When the slave's main concern is to please Allaah, He will make his silence be spent in contemplation and his speech consist of praise and gratitude to Allaah."

The most honourable gatherings are those which are spent in contemplation and pondering upon the Names and Attributes of Allaah, Hell, Paradise, the reward of Allaah, the punishment of Allaah, the favours of Allaah, the Hereafter, and the verses of the *Qur'aan*. These are indeed the sweetest and purest gatherings.

Imaam Shaafi'i*, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: *"Virtue lies is in four things: Wisdom, the basis of which is contemplation; chastity, the basis of which is controlling one's desires; strength, the basis of which is controlling oneself at the time of anger; and justice, the basis of which is being moderate in ones views"

The most beneficial type of contemplation is over:

- **What benefits the slave in the Hereafter and how to achieve them.**
- **Preventing evil consequences in the Hereafter and how to avoid them.**

These are the most honourable matters to contemplate over, and the way to attain such benefits and prevent such evils is by contemplating over the favours of Allaah, His commandments and prohibitions, His Names and Attributes in the *Qur'aan* and the *Sunnah*, how quickly this life will vanish, and the eternal nature of the Hereafter; the more one thinks about the brevity of this life, the more effort he will exert to appropriately utilise his time. After these matters, the following are next in importance:

- **Matters that are beneficial in this life, and how to attain them.**
- **Evils that could afflict one, and how to avoid them.**

à **Allaah Has mentioned contemplation in the *Qur'aan* and parallels it with mentioning His favours, His creation and His abilities, such as when He says:**

أيود أحدكم أن تكون له جنة من نخيل وأعناب تجري من تحتها الأنهار له فيها من كل الثمرات وأصابه الكبر وله ذرية ضعفاء فأصابها إعصار فيه فاحترقت كذلك يبين الله لكم الآيات لعلكم تتفكرون

which means: *Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak [i.e., immature] offspring, and it is hit by a hurricane containing fire and is burned. Thus does Allaah make clear to you [His] verses that you might give thought."* [*Al-Baqarah: 266*] Such a man's heart would be attached to his garden from the following

perspectives:

- **It is a huge garden, not a small one.**
- **It includes many types of trees such as palm trees and grape trees.**
- **It includes trees that are very expensive.**
- **The garden is watered by running rivers and not from wells, which would have meant that a great deal of hard effort would be required to irrigate it.**
- **The man has become old and naturally needs a means of income without having to expend much effort.**
- **His children are young and sick, and he fears that they would not have any source of income after his death except from this garden.**

All the aforementioned points mean that the man's attachment to the garden would be immense, so how devastated would he be if this garden were to be struck by a tornado that would cause a fire that would raze his garden? He would be affected deeply; he would be confounded and distressed. Let us contemplate, why did Allaah give such an example?

This is an example that Allaah gives to those who perform many good deeds, but do them only to be seen doing so; on the Day of Resurrection, these people will need every good deed that they performed and their rewards; they will see the deeds that they performed in this life and also see Hell before their very eyes; the sun will descend, very close to people's heads; they will sweat greatly; the *Siraat* will be erected over the Hellfire and the only way for salvation will be by virtue of their good deeds, after the mercy of Allaah. But what will happen then? Allaah will then make their deeds worthless and scatter them everywhere. How devastated will they then be? What would it therefore take to make people contemplate and thus strive to be sincere in their deeds? It would take examples such as these - that are found in the *Qur'aan*.

Other similar verses are for example where Allaah says:

إنما مثل الحياة الدنيا كماء أنزلناه من السماء فاختلط به نبات الأرض مما يأكل الناس والأنعام حتى إذا أخذت الأرض زخرفها وازينت وظن أهلها أنهم قادرون عليها أتاها أمرنا ليلاً أو نهاراً فجعلناها حصيداً كأن لم تغنَ بالأمس كذلك نفصل الآيات لقوم يتفكرون

which means: ***"The example of this [worldly] life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb – [those] from which men and livestock eat***

– until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought." **[*Yoonus: 24*]**

à **Regarding contemplation upon the *Qur'aan* and the *Sunnah,* Allaah says:**

وما أرسنا من قبلك إلا رجالاً نوحي إليهم فاسألوا أهل الذكر إن كنتم لا تعلمون بالبينات والزبر وأنزلنا إليك الذكر لتبين للناس ما نزل إليهم ولعلهم يتفكرون

which means: ***"And We sent not before you except men to whom We revealed [Our message]. So ask the people of the message [i.e., former scriptures] if you do not know. [We sent them] with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you the message [i.e., the Qur'aan] that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought."*** **[*An-Nahl*: *43-44*]**

à **Another type of contemplation is over the evil end that others have come to, such as where Allaah says:**

أولم يتفكروا في أنفسهم ما خلق الله السموات والأرض وما بينهما إلا بالحق وأجل مسمىً وإن كثيراً من الناس بلقاء ربهم لكافرون أولم يسيروا في الأرض فينظروا كيف عاقبة الذين من قبلهم كانوا أشد منهم قوة وأثاروا الأرض وعمروها أكثر مما عمروها وجاءتهم رسلهم بالبينات فما كان الله ليظلمهم ولكن كانوا أنفسهم يظلمون

which means: ***"Do they not contemplate within themselves? Allaah has not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth and for a specified term. And indeed, many of the people, in the meeting with their Lord, are disbelievers. Have they not travelled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them? They were greater than them in power, and they plowed the earth and built it up more than they [i.e., the Makkans] have built it up, and their messengers came to them with clear evidences. And Allaah would not ever have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves."*** **[*Ar-Room: 8-9*]**

à **Another type is to contemplate over the power of the *Qur'aan* and its effect on other creations of Allaah, and then think about how one should react; Allaah says:**

لا يستوي أصحاب النار وأصحاب الجنة أصحاب الجنة هم الفائزون* لو أنزلنا هذا القرآن على جبلٍ على لرأيته خاشعاً متصدعاً من خشية الله وتلك الأمثال نضربها للناس لعلهم يتفكرون

which means: ***"Not equal are the companions of the Fire and the companions of Paradise. The companions of Paradise – they are the attainers [of success]. If We had sent down this Qur'aan upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and breaking down from fear of Allaah. And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought."*** **[*Al-Hashr: 20-21*]**

The Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* taught us contemplation; when he awoke for the optional night-prayer, he would look to the skies and then recite the abovementioned verse of *Soorah Aal-'Imraan* with which we started this lecture. Therefore, it is *Sunnah* to recite this verse before one begins his optional night-prayers. There is another opinion which states that he *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* would recite it after praying his two *Rak'ah Sunnah* for the *Fajr* prayer.

Contemplation of scholars assists them to produce sound rulings, thereby causing them to reach sound opinions regarding particular matters … Contemplation increases one's faith.

The most important fruit that results from contemplation is knowledge, and once the heart increases in knowledge, its condition changes noticeably for the better, this directly reflects on the limbs and consequently improves the overall status of a person.

What does it mean to contemplate over oneself? It includes contemplating over how Allaah has created his body and form, as well as to contemplate over one's shortcomings, which is vital because nobody can reform himself without contemplating over his shortcomings in order to correct them and rectify himself.

What did the famous Muslim reformers and rejuvenators do in order to change the condition of their people? There can be no doubt that the very first thing they did was to contemplate over the situation of their people in order to ascertain what they lacked and identify where the problems lied, and then, they began reformation by fighting ignorance, sinfulness and other such matters.

Contemplating over the creation of Allaah makes one recognise wonders that are proof of the wisdom of Allaah and His ability. Things that exist are either known or unknown to man, and there are new scientific discoveries daily of matters that have already existed but were unknown to man, but man will never be able to arrive at the essence of some of these matters, such as the human soul for example, which the west has endeavoured to discover, and this is the difference between us and them; therefore, Muslims do not waste any time trying to discover its reality because Allaah says:

قل الروح من أمر ربي

which means: *"…Say, 'the soul is of the affairs [i.e., concern] of my Lord…"* [*Al-Israa': 85*] Likewise, trying to discover the essence of angels comes in the same category. Thus,

contemplation over such matters should only be done in light of the texts from the *Qur'aan* and the *Sunnah*.

Some scholars said a thousand years ago: *"One of the signs of the greatness of Allaah is His creation of man from a single drop of sperm."* There are wonders in the way man was created, yet he is heedless, whilst Allaah says:

وفي أنفسكم أفلا تبصرون

which means: *"And in yourselves [there are signs]. Then will you not see?"* [*Ath-Thaariyaat*: *21*] Allaah mentions in many places of the *Qur'aan* the creation of man from a drop of sperm, and this repetition is for reminding us to contemplate over our creation.

Just contemplate! If this drop of sperm were to be left in the air, it would smell horribly after a short time. Allaah caused it be ejaculated from the male and created man from it. Note how Allaah joins the husband and wife and establishes love between them, due to which they have sexual intercourse, from which this filthy drop emerges from the man and settles in the woman's womb; Note how He creates from this white drop a red blood clot, then forms it into an embryo and after this He divides the embryo into bones, nerves, veins and flesh; then He forms from these the head, hands, legs, fingers, toes and inner body parts, each having a distinct shape, a special location, a particular task and operation, and so on.

Also, note how the bones, which are the strong and solid part of the body, are also created from a drop of sperm, which yield these bones that form the structure over which man is built; note how each bone has a special form, some small and others large, some hollow and others solid; and since man needs to be mobile, Allaah did not make these bones as one piece, rather, He created many bones with joints and ligaments connecting them in order to facilitate man's movement. The bones in mans head number more than fifty and all have different shapes, yet Allaah put them together in such a way as to make the shape of the head circular. The mention of numbers and details is not meant simply for information, but rather, so that we can think of the greatness of the Creator. If any bone were missing, or there were more than the number required, then this would be considered as a defect, and this is what concerns doctors, while the people of vision contemplate over the greatness of Allaah who created man in the best form and shape.

If all of this was created from a single drop of sperm, then what about the creation of the earth, the heavens, and the galaxies? Allaah says:

لَخَلْقُ ٱلسَّمَـٰوٰتِ وَٱلأَرْضِ أَكْـبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ ٱلنَّاسِ وَلَـٰكِنَّ أَكْـثَرَ ٱلنَّاسِ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ

which means: *"The creation of the heavens and earth is greater than the creation of mankind, but most of the people do not know. "* [*Ghaafir* :57]

After knowing these facts, go back to thinking about the drop of sperm; consider, if all of mankind and Jinn were to collectively endeavour to create anything from this drop, would they be able to? The fact is that they cannot even create a fly, let alone a human being.

If an artist were to draw a very close image of a human, people would be amazed to his ability to imitate, while in reality, all he did was to reflect the human's image with his hand using some paint; again, is it not appropriate and correct to ponder over how man was created by Allaah from this drop and then given the very best form and shape?

Another amazing thing is that the foetus, just before delivery, turns upside down when it gets larger and when the womb becomes too small for it, in preparation for emerging into this world; it does this as if it is a sound-minded person who thinks and plans ahead; then Allaah guided it to cling to its mother's nipple for food; look how Allaah shaped the breast and nipple in such a way that it is perfectly suitable for the baby to feed from; look how small the hole in the nipple is, so that the milk will not emerge without suckling. Allaah says:

هل أتى على الإنسان حين من الدهر لم يكن شيئاً مذكوراً * إنا خلقنا الإنسان من نطفة أمشاج نبتليه فجعلناه سميعاً بصيراً* إنا هديناه السبيل إما شاكراً وإما كفوراً

which means: *"Has there [not] come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned? Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing. Indeed, We guide him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful."* [*Al-Insaan: 1-3*]

Note the greatness of Allaah in just one of His creations - man; and then there are many wonders in the creation and structure of man which have not yet been discovered! How then is the case regarding all the hidden and unknown matters that Allaah Has instilled in the earth, rivers, seas and mountains?

If we take a look at some insects, we find amazing creations, such as the spider who builds his web with a wonderfully engineered design. It goes to riverbanks and looks for two close locations with a gap in between that is not more than two to three feet apart, and then begins constructing its web from one end by spiting its saliva, which is in the form of a thread, then goes to the other end and then goes back and forth, constructing very

accurate parallel lines in a beautiful symmetric manner; then it constructs lines that are at right-angles to form the shape of a net. After it finishes, it sits at one end of the net awaiting for a fly or other flying insects that it eats to fall into the trap (i.e., its net) and then it attacks it and eats it. If it fails to catch anything, it goes to the corner of the web and drops a thread from it, then it hangs itself from it upside down, and if a fly flies by, it throws itself on it, binds it with the thread, and eats it.

Regardless of how small or big a creature is, one will find many amazing things regarding it which cannot be enumerated … did such creatures teach themselves all these amazing things? Did other humans teach them? Anyone with vision will definitely realise the greatness of Allaah in these small creatures and realise the perfect ability and wisdom of Allaah. Man is far more complicated and amazing in his creation than animals, and yet when man sees a strange worm or animal, he becomes astonished by its creation more than he does by his own amazing structure!

Allaah Has commanded us to contemplate over His creation and encouraged us to contemplate over the creation of man, the seas, the heavens and the earth, but why is this so? *Shaykh 'Abdur-Rahmaan As-Sa'di,* may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: *"Allaah Has commanded this in order for man to discover the reason behind his creation, which entails that contemplation is an act of worship that is performed only by those whom Allaah chooses, and when they do so, they realise that they were not created haphazardly."* Some people are only attracted to the final shape of the creation but never stop to think about the reason for its creation and the great objective behind it, which is to contemplate, and thus worship Allaah.

Contemplating over matters related to the Hereafter is a very important matter. We do not have any of the fruits of Paradise, nor do we have any of the chains with which people are punished in Hell, but we do have texts from the *Qur'aan* and the *Sunnah* describing to us in detail how things will be on the Day of Resurrection, with all their descriptions; this is from the mercy of Allaah, in order for us to have something to contemplate over, because the more one knows about the Hereafter, the more his heart will react.

Why does Allaah mention to us the preconditions of the Hour? He does so in order for them to be something that we contemplate upon. We must always be concerned about these matters. The problem is in man, who does not ponder or contemplate about any of these matters; people have busied themselves nowadays thinking about prohibited matters, like a lover, or about worldly pleasures; pleasure has overwhelmed people's lives, and thus contemplating over important matters, which would result in true pleasure and happiness, has become rare.

Once *Sufyaan,* may Allaah have mercy upon him, was in a gathering, when suddenly, the lamp that was lighting the congregation ran out of oil, and so its flame went out; after someone had added oil and re-ignited the lamp, they found that *Sufyaan*, may Allaah have mercy upon him, had cried; so they asked him why he did so, and he replied: *"This darkness reminded me of the grave."* Due to the hearts of such people being alive, anything around them caused them to contemplate and connect that to the important matters which one ought to contemplate over.

One of the *Salaf,* may Allaah have mercy upon him, was waiting for bread in a bakery, when he began staring at the fire and crying like a baby. A man asked him why, and he replied: *"I remembered the Hellfire."*

'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azeez,* may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: *"Contemplation is one of the favours of Allaah and one of the best acts of worship that one can perform."

'Abdullaah ibn 'Utbah,* may Allaah have mercy upon him, asked *Umm Tharr, may Allaah be pleased with her,* about the best act of worship that *Abu Tharr,* may Allaah be pleased with him, would perform, she answered: *"Contemplation."

Al-Hasan,* may Allaah have mercy upon him, wrote to *'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azeez,* may Allaah have mercy upon him, saying: *"Know that contemplation encourages one to do good and encourages one to shun evil and regret it."

Muhammad ibn Ka'b,* may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: *"To recite only chapter Az-Zalzalah and Al-Qaari'ah all night long with contemplation is dearer to me than reciting the entire Qur'aan without contemplation."

One must always contemplate, because this will lead him to performing things which please Allaah and which instil tranquillity in his heart, which would make him fearful of Allaah, give him wisdom, and revive his heart.